



Alabama Department of Mental Health requests increase in funding

BY ADAM POWELL ON JANUARY 14, 2016

SLIDER, STATE

During this week's budget hearings, the **Alabama Department of Mental Health** (ADMH) made its case for "level funding" before members of the state legislature.

"Level funding does not necessarily mean level services," said ADMH Commissioner **James Perdue**.

Perdue noted that because the cost of doctor visits, medications and other services continue to increase, the reception of similar funding from last year may not provide services equivalent to the previous year.

"Nobody in the House or Senate is unsympathetic," Perdue said. "All of them are compassionate men and women, there's just a limited amount of funds."

After last year's budget struggles, Perdue's department was forced to close facilities in Decatur, Montgomery and Mobile – facilities that provided beds to a number of mentally ill patients in the state – and there is "no hope" of those facilities being reopened.

"It creates a very critical problem across the state," Perdue said. "We're busting at the seams, there's a high demand for services and we're just not able to serve everyone."

Currently the department cares for 6,000 people across the state with "intellectual or developmental disabilities" and another 3,500 are in need of service.

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on grounds of insanity, and Bryce Hospital, a secure facility for patients who are considered potentially dangerous.

Perdue doesn't believe that there is an appetite for raising taxes to fill the possible budget gap and, for that reason, his department is striving to find creative ways to provide the services that Alabamians need to combat mental illness and its various manifestations.

The department plans to collaborate with the **Department of Corrections** to serve the mentally ill currently incarcerated and address autism early with intense programming to avoid expensive rehabilitation later in patients' lives.

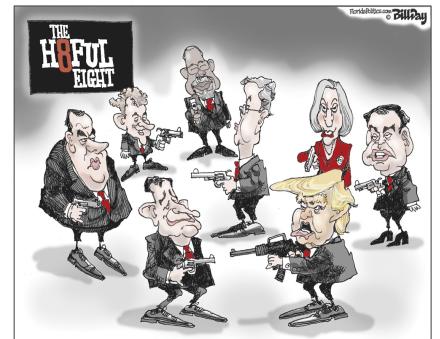
"We're certainly going to need further funding," Perdue relented.

If the department receives less funding than it did last year, Perdue believes that many local programs designed to

aid the mentally ill will have to be cut.



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Teachers divided into two salary tracks:

Track 1: "Performance Track"

- Slightly higher (up to \$2,500) starting pay
- Bonus if rated "exceeds/significantly exceeds expectations," however:
- If rated "below/significantly below expectations," cannot be given any raise. Nor would a "satisfies expectations" rating qualify for a bonus.
- No job security - can be fired at any time
- Can NEVER switch over/back to "traditional track"

Track 2: "Traditional Track"

- due process rights related to job protection
- lower starting pay
- increases from 3 to 5 years experience in a district for tenure, with average rating of 3.0 on a 5 point scale.
- Tenure can be revoked with 2 "significantly below expectations" evaluations--start's year clock over again.
- Support personnel no longer eligible for tenure

No credit given for years of experience or additional degrees earned (except NBCT bonus).



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